CRITICAL DIGEST

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The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current New York Theatre Scene

New York Theatre Diary

Broadway business continues slow with current 12 shows looking like they will all hold out to Sept 1. Guys and Dolls, now doing fair business at Washington.D.C. National Theatre has decided to stay two more weeks, returning to NY's 46th St Theatre Aug 24 instead of Aug 10.

Strawhat Tryouts

Remember Me, a comedy-drama by soap opera writer Elaine Carrington which debuted at Spring Lake,NJ,Playhouse,was panned by a trio of NY critics. Trite theme and soap opera style writing were the major complaints filed by Dash, Woman's Wear, McDonald, Billboard and Glib,Variety...The Frogs of Spring, Nathaniel Benchley's adaption of his New Yorker "Side Street" stories which was tried out at Falmouth,Mass,Playhouse, has Broadway possibilities,rated Dias,Variety. Burgess Meredith's staging keeps cast headed by Anthony Ross and Hiram Sherman running smoothly for 2 acts of first rate comedy. But final stanza is woefully uncertain and unconclusive...Women Are People, Milton J Kramer's new comedy seen at Great Neck,LI,Playhouse by Coleman,Mirror,is a brittle study in feminine psychology,the critic rates...Once Married,Twice Shy,-a comedy by Theatre Guild co-producer Lawrence Langer presented at Westport,Conn,Country Playhouse,makes fine summer theatre fare, comments Doul,Variety...Slim chances of making Broadway, was the way 3 Variety muggs panned An Ancient Instinct, Sigmund Miller's play seen at Wakefield,RI, Theatre, After Taxes, Gordon Wholey's comedy seen at Sea Cliff,LI ,Theatre, and The Angry Apes, Harry Ridgley's comedy produced at Pittsburgh's White Barn Theatre.

London Report

A trio of NY critics, Watts,Post, Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun, and McClain, Journal American, reported on their week's London play shopping. Escapade, Roger MacDougall's comedy which may be seen in NY this season, is rated by the Post reviewer as one of the most attractive and interesting works of the recent English theatre. Except for a let down in the 3rd act,critic thinks play about youth's desire for peace is intelligent comedy,set down with wit,freshness. Noel Coward in Shaw's second rate play The Apple Cart makes a good theatrical evening, Watts okays. Another cheer recorded for Diana Lynn in the London production of The Moon is Blue is filed by Morehouse, while the WT&S columnist-critic rates the English company of The 7 Year Itch as less expert than the NY crew. Though McClain enjoyed Alan Melville's comedy Dear Charles, he doubts if Broadwayites would think it very funny. But if it is produced in NY the critic advises Helen Hayes,rather than Tallulah Bankhead in the lead, and a new third act.

Minority Report

Though Me and Juliet took a mild panning from most of the critics, it remains a highly entertaining show, rates Johnson, music critic of Post. Rodgers immense gift in settling Hammerstein's engaging lyrics as if everybody were talking not singing is present in abundance,she comments While the reviewer does note that Rodgers has neglected to adapt his music to the big needs of the book more than Hammerstein has missed highlighting his story. Joan McCracken ,the critic believes,deserves top billing.

Village Theatre

The Heiress will be presented by the Green Room Studio at 145 Bleecker St week-ends from Aug 14 to Sept 27...Circle in the Square received a plaque from the Greenwich Village Chamber of Commerce. Louis Soloman, president of the Chamber of Commerce, noted that the bronze plaque crystalized the admiration and encouragement of Village residents and merchants toward the group now presenting The Grass Harp.

Off Broadway

Nightmare Abbey, a comedy by Anthony Sharp based on Thomas Love Peacock's 19th Century novel will be present Aug 5-7 by Drama Workshop of Teachers College, Columbia University...Experimental Theatre of Dramatic Workshop continues to present 3 one act plays Egbert, The Other and Presenting Jane...Caravan Theatre will present a Negro Romeo and Juliet and a white production of the same play Aug 17 at 110 E 59...The Climate of Eden will be presented by Current Stages in October.

Vaudeville

Palace show this week features Milton Douglas, Ciro Rimac, the Satisfiers, Slim Timblin, Fred Lowery, Pauline Thorn, Ching and Jordan and Parvis.

Yiddish Theatre

Benjamin Rothman, who has produced plays at the Yiddish Theatre on 2nd Ave for 25 years, has taken a lease on the President Theatre, 247 W 48. His first play there will be presented in October ...Second Marriage, an adaption of Louis Freiman's Yiddish radio series, opens the season at the Second Ave Theatre Oct 5. Marian Kressyn, who plays in the radio series, will star in the Irving Jacobson, Edmund Zayenda production.

Theatre Record Comments

"New Moon"(Decca) album approved by Billboard and Cue critics. Tradepaper reviewing staff rated disc a 73 pointing out that Jane Wilson, Thomas Hayward and the Victor Young orchestra give just the right amount of sentimentality to this musically competent performance. While Lewis, Cue, enjoyed the record, but couldn't help from wondering if today's youngsters don't find the enormous success of the lushly romantic, sentimental Romberg operattas avexing oddity.

"Cole Porter Songs"(Walden) with Louise Carlyle, backed up by a piano duet, recommended by Zinnser, Herald Tribune, and Variety mugg. Disc contains 10 of the composer's popular songs. Same company last year issued "Lyrics by Ira Gershwin" record.

"Can-Can"(Capitol) original cast album okayed by Hobson, Saturday Review, as a delightful melodious adventure, with fun and romance for all ages in the family. Critic might agree with others who doubted if score equalled Porter past hits, but he did believe the disc shows a lot of fine tunesmithing, some deliberately and effectively simple comedy, and a bit of charmingly bogus Offenbach.

Gift Coupon

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Green Room Department

BROADWAY BLUES...The Times Square area has become the home of tinhorn auctions,panhandlers,sellers of absurd novelty hats and suggestive literature and pictures, points out Times editorial. 42nd St and Broadway, which is the foot of the theatrical district, earned its legends in better days than are upon it now,the editorial writer sighs.The paper backs the 42nd St Association demand for new rezoning laws and for stricter application of the existing statutes.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...London reviewers don't like one another any better than NY critics do, surmises,Watts,Post...With several musicals with a Coney Island theme promised, Watt,News, would like to see the oft planned musical version of Excursion...Chances of seeing a Broadway musical on either Fee or Theatre TV are very slim, predicts, Obrian,Journal American, because more than 24 TV unions and 16 theatre unions would make it very complicated.

"MAIN" PREVIEW...A second critic pans the "Main Street to Broadway" film this week. Time reviewer bluntly states that the MGM Lester Cowan film, which promises a percentage of the gross to the Council of the Living Theatre, is dedicated to the fond belief that everybody west of the Jersey Turnpike is simply fascinated by the theatre in NY. But,the magazine pans, they may not be after seeing this movie which is about as real as an actress' eyelashes. The ideas in the script, review notes, are generally kindergarten.

COLUMN TIPS...The cast of Wish You Were Here is unhappy about losing their recent pay boost , hears Winchell...Hundreds of theatre folks are looking for the publisher of "Who's Who in Show Business", the fancy theatrical directory which charged $25 per listing, reports Kilgallen...Wish You Were Here's, success inspite of panning by all but 1 of the critics, continues to make monkeys out of the aisle-sitters, quips Gardner.

THEATRE WORKERS...Professional playreaders are now a vanishing breed with most producers delegating the work to staff members, a Variety survey reveals...Well heeled producers were invited to get busy and put our top song writers back to work,urges Watt,News...A director can stage a play with a cast talking a foreign language, explains Clurman,Nation, because the language of the theatre is a kind of universal language of action. The correct use of speech in the theatre,he feels, is not necessarily achieved by the person with the best diction, but by the actor with the clearest dramatic intention.

ADAMS OBIT...There was something about Maude Adams that was elusive and ineffable,an undefinable and incommunicable quality that enchanted playgoers and that upon occasion bewildered the critics, recalls Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun. She was quite the most beloved player of her time, an actress with a funny,throaty voice and it was a voice of unearthly beauty, a rippling laugh and a quaint tossing of her head.

Pros & Cons by TMK

Every year about this time the merchant associations and the various theatre groups join to complain about the excess number of persistent,annoying,and phony "charity" collectors operating in the mid town area. Columnists devote space to the group that annoy theatre patrons during intermissions. But some how inspite of all the space and talk, nothing ever gets done about this racket. The police seem to act swiftly against pitchmen selling their wares, but are reluctant to curb these females. Maybe this is the year the practice will be wiped out.

NYC Theatre News Round Up

Broadway legitimate theatre owners and producers have organized in an attempt to get President Eisenhower to veto the Mason Tax Bill, which passed both houses of Congress by a voice vote. The bill, which would repeal the 20% tax on motion picture admissions, but not on legitimate theatre admissions, was branded unfair and discriminatory in a joint telegram sent to the president by 3 producers groups, The bill must be signed or vetoed within the week. The League of NY Theatres, the Council of the Living Theatre and the National Association of the Legitimate Theatres reminded the chief executive ,in their wire, that the theatre industry has suffered a 75% cut in size and employment opportunities within the past 25 years. It pointed out that where there were thousands of legitimate theatres a quarter of a century ago, there are now less than 200 in the entire country. During this period,they stated, the industry has received no tax relief whatever.

No matter what the outcome of this controversial bill, the theatre industry will have a chance to voice its own point of view at a House Ways and Means Committee hearing in Washington.D.C. on August 5. Delegations from various producer and union groups will be represented in an effort to win repeal of the 20% tax on legitimate theatre admissions at the next session of Congress.

Rodgers and Hammerstein, like the month of "June" in their popular song, are bustin' out all over. Come August 31, they will have 4 of their musical productions playing in NY. This theatre feat will be achieved by a 3 week limited engagement of Oklahoma at the City Center. The musical,which was originally presented by the Theatre Guild for over 2000 performances at the St. James, will now be produced by Rodgers and Hammerstein. The details of this switch in production rights is not revealed by either the producing pair or the Guild.

People

3 top theatre names signed for Jan 1954 productions. Henry Fonda will star in The Caine Mutiny Court Martial, Herman Wouk's special dramatization of a sequence from his own best seller, which Paul Gregory will produce. Shirley Booth will star in By the Beautiful Sea, a new musical about Coney Island by Herbert and Dorothy Fields, which Robert Fryer will produce. Agnes de Mille will stage the dances in The Girl In Pink Tights, the Romberg-Fields,Chodorov musical which Shepard Traube will produce... Isabel Bigley,Me and Juliet, married Lawrence Barnett,Music Corporation of America, at 12 Noon Monday in Norwalk,Conn,and returned to NY by curtain time

Theatre TV & Radio Notes

Filmed excerpts from 48 college musicals will be seen in 1 hour TV films to be produced by Wilanl Productions...ABC TV plans to telecast 3 current NY plays next fall to 40 motion picture theatres around the country at $2.40 top...Renee Carroll ,Sardi hat check girl, is writing a TV series entitled "Here's Your Hat", which will detail her experiences with the theatre's great...Maude Adams was planning a radio series for NBC, in which she would have discussed topics of the day with philosphical overtones.

Theatre Record Notes

Mary Martin-Ethel Merman duet on "Fort 50th Anniversary TV Show" will be recorded by Decca...John Brown's Body with Tyrone Poer ,Raymond Massey to be recorded by Columbia

Theatre Obits

Jennie Moscowtiz,85,best known for her portrayl of the mother in Counseller at Law died at Kingsbridge Home for the Aged,Bronx, NY.